

# Balikatan



**Republic of the Philippines and  
the United States of America  
Shoulder to Shoulder into the Future**







Armed Forces of the Philippines service members along with U.S. Marines and Sailors from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit conduct Marine Corps Martial Arts Program training, Feb. 21, during Balikatan 2008.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jason Spinella

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## ON THE COVER

Students at Paaralang Elementary of Del Carmen in Florida Blanca contend for position in a group photo during a visit from the AFP and U.S. service members Feb. 26.

*(Photo by Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay)*

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# Opening Ceremony

*"I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the generous people of the Republic of the Philippines."*

— U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney —

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd

Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. service members stood shoulder to shoulder in the Officer's Club banquet hall at Camp Aguinaldo, Philippines, Feb. 18, watching the uncasing of the Balikatan Colors, symbolizing the start of this year's exercise.

"I am very optimistic that the exercise Balikatan 2008 will live up to our high expectations," said AFP Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., chief of staff for the AFP. "Thus, by purview of the authority vested in me as the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and co-chairman of the [Republic of the Philippines-United States] Mutual Defense group, I hereby declare the RP-US Balikatan Exercise 2008 open."

Balikatan 2008 is an annual RP-U.S. bilateral military exercise consisting of humanitarian assistance and training activities. Since 1981, both militaries have met to learn from one another and improve on their interoperability. This year's exercise runs from Feb. 18 to March 3.

True to its meaning in Filipino, Balikatan entails Philippine and U.S. forces shouldering the load together to help the greatest possible number of people in need, according to AFP Brig. Gen. Nestor R. Sadiarin, co-exercise

director of BK 08.

"Our troops are ready to maximize the opportunity to do something that will have lasting benefits for peace and social progress in the mission areas," Sadiarin said. "We'll do that by sharing the load together."

Balikatan 2008 will focus on training both armed forces to provide relief and assistance, in the event of natural disasters and other crises that endanger public health and safety.

AFP and U.S. forces will conduct combined staff exercises and field training in Luzon and Palawan to improve contingency planning and strengthen maritime security. U.S. Navy ships are scheduled to visit several locations in the Philippines as well.

There are also dozens of medical, dental and engineering civil action projects scheduled in Luzon, Lanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan over the next couple of weeks.

"Joined together in a collective effort, our military medical professionals along with local doctors, nurses, veterinarians and volunteers will provide free medical, dental and veterinary care to local communities where these services are most needed," said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. John Y. H. Ma, co-exercise director of BK 08.

"Balikatan 2007 was my first in this

country," added U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "I set out to see just what this means, and I very much liked what I saw. I traveled to the Sulu Archipelago where I saw doctors from our two nations, pairing with local civilians to offer free medical care to thousands of people, no questions asked."

Engineering projects are scheduled for numerous schools, including Pang Elementary School in Jolo, St. Juliana Elementary School in Crow Valley and Maragondon National High School in Ternate, which was destroyed in a fire last April.

"It's humbling to be a part of such an effort that will have a profound impact on the young people and future leaders of the people of the Republic of the Philippines," Ma said.

"There is possibly no greater satisfaction than the thought of healthy children in a remote location going to school in a schoolhouse that thanks to our combined efforts, has a roof on it, has a ceiling fan, has a dignified environment where teachers can teach and students can learn," Kenney added. "This has an impact on all of us."

The Republic of the Philippines and the U.S. have spent 50 years as Mutual Defense Treaty partners. The U.S. is participating in BK 08 at the invitation of the government of the Republic of the Philippines.

Ma concluded, "I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the generous people of the Republic of the Philippines who have so graciously invited us once again to this beautiful country to learn the lessons from your Soldiers and people that will further the bonds of this strong partnership of peace."

(From left) Brig. Gen. Nestor Sadiarin, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto Romulo, U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Jr. and Brig. Gen. John Ma hold hands during the opening ceremony, symbolizing the start of Balikatan 2008 at Camp Aguinaldo, Philippines Feb. 18. Balikatan 2008 focuses on training armed forces from the Republic of the Philippines and the U.S. to provide relief and assistance together in the event of crises and strengthen maritime security. Both countries' forces will also conduct numerous humanitarian assistance and community relations activities.



Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd



Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. military engineers work together to build an elementary school Feb. 22 for the community of Kadingilan in Basak Marawi.

Navy MC2 Brett Cody

# Shoulder to Shoulder

## AFP and U.S. military engineers build an elementary school in Basak Marawi

By Army Capt. Meritt Phillips

Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. military engineers are working shoulder to shoulder, building and repairing Basak Elementary School at Basak Marawi, Feb. 22. It is one of the many engineering civil action projects taking place during Balikatan 2008.

Filipino builders of the 524th Engineering Construction Battalion, 52nd Engineering Brigade, from Barangay Maria Cristin, Balo-I, in Lanao del Norte and U.S. Sailors attached to Underwater Construction Unit 2 (UCU2), Port Hue-

neme, Calif., began working Feb. 15, on new construction and renovations to the elementary school and are scheduled to complete the project Feb. 29.

Once complete, the school will have a new classroom, new stage and will be freshly painted. Two existing classrooms are also being repaired. The completed project, which also includes a new flag pole, costs approximately \$40,000.

"One of the interesting aspects of working with the Filipino Seabees is that we learn a lot of practical ways to build," said Chief Petty Officer Jason Ventin, officer in charge, UCU 2. "For example, mixing concrete on the ground instead of in a bucket when one is not available. They are very diligent with the care and use of their tools and teach this to us, which is why some of their units have workable saws that are 30 years old."

"This opportunity to work shoulder to shoulder with our American counterparts has allowed us to impart our expertise, training and style to our counterparts,"

said Philippine 1st Lt. Elvin Rayo, officer in charge of the 19-man construction element from the 524th ECB. "The primary job of the 524th ECB, is to support the socio-economic infrastructure of the government."

Balikatan, an annual Republic of the Philippines-U.S. bilateral military humanitarian assistance and training exercise, is taking place in the Philippines Feb. 18 - March 3, 2008.

During Balikatan 2008, Philippine and U.S. members of the armed forces are conducting humanitarian assistance projects throughout the Philippines. They offer free medical, dental and veterinary care and construct and repair schools and other community infrastructure in communities most in need of assistance.

Balikatan's focus is on training both AFP and U.S. forces to provide relief and assistance together, in the event of natural disasters and other crises that endanger public health and safety. Military service members of both countries are also conducting combined staff exercises and field training in Luzon and Palawan to improve contingency planning and strengthen maritime security.

Balikatan 2008



Navy MCC Gabe Puella

Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. military engineers work together to build an elementary school Feb. 22 for the community of Kadingilan in Basak, Marawi.



# Ambassador, U.S. PACOM Commander oversee progress at Maragondon

*By Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd*

Rows of little girls and boys lined the driveway to Maragondon National High School in Ternate Feb. 26, waving hand-made Filipino and American flags to welcome several special visitors to their school.

U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Adm. Timothy J. Keating, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, came to the school to see the construction progress that U.S. and Filipino Marines had made since Feb. 18, the beginning of this year's Balikatan activities.

Some of the classrooms in Maragondon National High School were destroyed by a fire last April. Since then, the approximately 1500 students have been forced to crowd into the remaining classrooms.

"It is the building of classrooms which burned down about a few months ago," said Maragondon Mayor Monte Andaman. "And this is the phoenix that grows from the ashes with the help of our American friends who are here right now in cooperation with our Filipino Soldiers. For that, we thank you."

After arriving at the school, Kenney and Keating, along with General and Mrs. Esperon and Mrs. Keating, walked up and down the rows of children, shaking hands and giving high fives. A couple of journalism students from the school were able to interview Keating.

They then took a quick tour of the construction. Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit stopped to give a quick synopsis of the work completed so far. Not to be out done, Kenney, Esperon, and Keating grabbed some paint brushes and helped paint a wall.

"My mother was a public school teacher, my grandmother was a public school teacher so the chance to see kids learning in a classroom that has been rebuilt together using American and Philippine labor," Kenney said. "It's a wonderful sight. I'm happy to think of all the smart, young minds that will be able to flourish after this."

The distinguished guests then moved to the auditorium, where they were treated to a dance by Maragondon school children. After addressing the crowd, the group threw basketballs, volleyballs and soccer balls to the children in the crowd.

This project is just one of the many engineering civil action projects being conducted throughout the two weeks of Balikatan, with several more scheduled over the next couple of days.

During Balikatan 2008, members of both armed forces are doing humanitarian assistance projects and training exercises that will enhance their ability to provide joint relief and assistance, in the event of natural disasters and other crises that endanger public health and safety.

On Feb. 19 and 20, dentists and doctors from the 31st MEU and Armed Forces of the Philippines provided free medical and dental care to over 2,000 patients at Maragondon National High School.

AFP and U.S. forces also continue conducting combined staff exercises and field training in Luzon and Palawan to improve contingency planning and strengthen maritime security.

"Balikatan is of critical importance to us at the United States Pacific Command," Keating said. "It symbolizes the friendship that is the very centerpiece of our strategy all throughout the Pacific. And there is no stronger partner for the United States and the United States military than the Republic of the Philippines and the (Armed Forces of the Philippines.)"







U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney gives a high five to a student at Maragondon National High School Feb. 26 as Wanda Lee Keating, wife of Adm. Timothy J. Keating, Commander of United States Pacific Command and Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, look on during Balikatan 08.



# Welcome to the Jungle

## Philippine Army Special Forces teach U.S. Army Soldiers to survive

By Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

**M**ore than 100 U.S. Soldiers spent the day maneuvering through thick jungle brush to eat wild leaves and insects, then quenched their thirst with a little king cobra blood with their Philippine counterparts, all to enhance their jungle survival skills and rope negotiating skills Feb. 19 at the Philippine Army Special Forces School.

The U.S. Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry, Guam Army National Guard and 2nd Battalion, 200th Infantry, New Mexico Army National Guard spent a brief, but memorable day, testing their strength, endurance and stomachs under the “jump wings” of the Philippine Army Special Forces Soldiers.

“It’s great. I have learned so much in the short time we’ve been out here,” said U.S. Army Pvt. Lorenzo Castillo, an infantryman with 2-200.

The Soldiers began by tackling a rope course, which weaved through the dense jungle canopy and culminated in the ‘slide for life’ obstacle. The slide required the Soldier to hold a thick branch while sliding 300 feet to the ground from

a 100 foot high platform.

“Honestly it was kind of scary,” Castillo said, “but it’s a challenge and I am glad I did it.”

After climbing around in the trees, the Soldiers were led down a path that displayed animal traps built from natural materials by the chief instructor, Philippine Army Master Sgt. Jaime Agonoy, who has more than 31 years of knowledge and experience in the special forces field. He brought laughter into the hot, muggy day with one-liners and gestures that made up for his broken English. Laughter and survival instinct proved to be a language both nations’ warriors were fluent in.

After learning to trap game, U.S. Soldiers learned to gather other essential resources from the jungle, such as edible and medicinal plants and insects, as well as water-gathering methods.

The Philippine instructors continued to display their resourcefulness by steaming rice inside a bamboo stick.

Many of the American Soldiers put their stomachs to the test, trying the jungle food, most of which they found to



Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

Philippine Army Master Sgt. Jaime Agonoy gives a drink of water to a Soldier after slicing bamboo, one of the methods to gather water, during the survival course.

be surprisingly tasty.

“They taste like lemons,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Randy Eustaquio, an infantryman with 1-294, after tasting red ants off a tree branch. “They have a little zest to them,” he said with a laugh. Philippines Staff Sgt. Manolo Martin, assistant chief instructor at the survival course then took the stage. Martin brought out the next animal on the buffet line, which had some Soldiers taking a few steps back - a king cobra. Martin explained how to capture a snake with just a stick as it slithered between his boots, occasionally slithering closer to the American Soldiers.

A handful of the Americans, with the instructors help, pinned the snake’s head and snatched it up before tossing it back to the ground.

Finally, it was time for the infamous highlight of the course; cooking the cobra and drinking its blood - a warrior tradition shared by both Philippine and American Soldiers.

“Drinking the snake’s blood was definitely the highlight,” Eustaquio said. “It was a very different and unique experience.”

The Philippine Soldiers said the course was a great experience with their international guests, “I had a Soldier shake my hand and say, ‘thank you so much for your instruction today,’” Agonoy said. “They tell me that they have learned some great things and I’m glad I had the chance to be their teacher.”

Philippine Pfc. Francisco K. Camaton, a course instructor, echoed Agonoy’s sentiments, “I’m really happy to be an instructor and get the chance to teach American Soldiers,” he said. “I’ve learned much from them and it feels good to give back.”

The American Soldiers felt the same way about the opportunity to participate, “It’s been really good to work with the Philippine Special Forces,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joshua Piper, a rifle squad leader with 2-200. “The cohesion has been great.”



Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

Philippine Army Tech. Sgt. Jaime Donato coaches Lt. Col. Mark Arellano on how to recover after slipping off a rope bridge.





Philippine Army Master Sgt. Jaime Agonoy demonstrates one of the various traps used to catch wildlife during the survival course at Fort Ramon Magsaysay Feb. 19 during Exercise Balikatan. Agonoy is the chief instructor of the survival course at the Philippine Army's Special Forces School.

Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay







# SMILE!

## *Philippine & U.S. Soldiers improve area with dental exams and school repairs*

By Army Sgt. Stephen Proctor

Philippine and American Soldiers pounded nails, spread tar and painted walls to fix some schools and checked mouths and pulled teeth to fix some smiles during a combination dental and engineering civic assistance program near Fort Magsaysay Feb. 22.

Soldiers from the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division, worked in conjunction with U.S. Task Force 294, comprised of more than 100 Soldiers from the Guam and New Mexico Army National Guard, to conduct multiple humanitarian assistance projects in the Santa Rosa municipality of Nueva Ecija, Philippines, during Balikatan 2008.

The Soldiers conducted two dental civic assistance programs and a variety of repairs on three schools in two brana-gays, or towns, along the newly paved Santa Rosa Highway,



Army Sgt. Stephen Proctor



Army Sgt. Stephen Proctor

according to Lt. Col. Kenneth Nava, a New Mexico National Guardsman who was in charge of coordinating the event. "Last year it was paved," he said. "[So] in order to show some goodwill to the people along this road, these two barangays were picked for this [community relations] activity."

Philippine and U.S. Soldiers got some sun perched on the tin roof at one elementary school as they spread tar to patch up some holes. On the ground, local kids peeked through the slatted windows of the building to see more Soldiers tearing out and replacing rotting ceiling panels and walls while yet another group repainted the room next door.

The Soldiers took their task here seriously, "The money for the repairs came from the Family Readiness Group of the Guam National Guard and from the Soldiers themselves," said Nava. "The Soldiers of Task Force 294 donated more than \$1,000 that has been used for the building materials for the repairs that they're doing."

Down the road at the annex to the elementary school, Soldiers worked together to repair an outdoor bathroom, cover some exposed sewer pipes, repair a fence and clear away trash, brush and overgrown grass. "It's great, really great, [to be able to help out in these communities]," said U.S. Army Spc. Philip Escribalo, with the Guam National Guard. "I know they appreciate it. The moment you're here helping out, they really appreciate it."

Between the two schools, Soldiers ran around the Liway-way Hall courtyard playing with kids, bringing smiles to their faces as they tossed new basketballs, footballs and t-shirts to the children, while an American and Filipino dentist worked on the stage to fix some youngster's smiles and pass out toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss.

"I enjoy coming out here and helping them out," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gerson Valles, a dentist with the State Medical Command, Guam National Guard. "I know sometimes, especially out in these provinces, they don't have the capabilities [to visit the] health professionals they would like to."

This cooperative effort between the two nations gave the Soldiers a break from training, but also offered them the opportunity to get to know each other on a more personal level. "The Soldiers are having a great time laughing and finding a lot of common ground with culture and food," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Afaisen, assistant coordinator for the projects.

A Philippine Soldier agreed, "The Filipino and American relationship is actually better [because of this event]," said Philippine Army Sgt. Nelson Regaspi during a fence-mending break. But it also improves the relationships with the local communities by showing the citizens that the Filipinos work hand in hand with the Americans, he said. "The Armed Forces of the Philippines feels closer to the community and to the Americans during these projects."

The Soldiers are planning to spend at least two more days working in the community on similar projects to help foster the long-standing friendship between the Philippines and the U.S. "[We want everyone] to understand that we're really shoulder to shoulder and we're here as friends," Afaisen said. "And sincerely that's why we're here. To help each other out."

(Opposite) Philippine Army Capt. Daniel De Vera (left), a dentist with the 7th Infantry Division's Dental Detachment, pulls an aching tooth from the mouth of Maricris, 9, with the assistance of U.S. Army Spc. Analuz Garcia, a dental technician with the State Medical Command, Guam Army National Guard during the DENCAP.

(Above) A local boy holds on to the new basketball he got from Guam Army National Guard Soldiers at the DENCAP.

(Left) The Soldiers work shoulder to shoulder repairing a fence at the annex to the elementary school during the COMREL.



Community relations projects have helped beautify and renovate 12 schools, 2 bases, 2 national landmarks and a public area during Balikatan 2008.







Philippine and U.S. service members paint the side of a class room at Paaralang Elementary of Del Carmen in Florida Blanca, Philippines, Feb. 26 during Balikatan 2008. Balikatan is an annual, bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military. During the visit, service members restored areas of the school, donated books and supplies and spent time with more than 350 students.

Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

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Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

▲ Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew R. White, a mass communication specialist from Fleet Public Affairs Center, Yokosuka, Japan, videotapes a group of excited youngsters from Paaralang Elementary School in Floridablan Feb. 26.



Navy MC1 Michael D. Kennedy

▲ Landing craft air cushion 63 makes its approach to the well deck of the amphibious transport dock USS Juneau (LPD 10). The Juneau is part of the Essex Expeditionary Strike Group (ESX ESG). The ESX ESG arrived for the annual Republic of the Philippines and the United States bilateral exercise Balikatan, Feb 18.





Navy MC2 Joshua Wahl

- ▲ Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit work with Sailors assigned to the forward-deployed dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry to clean up a construction site during an engineering project in Luzon, Philippines, as part of the annual bilateral exercise Balikatan 2008. During BK 08 humanitarian assistance and training activities, military service members from the United States and Republic of the Philippines work together to improve maritime security and ensure humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts are efficient.

*Engineering Civic Assistance Programs have helped repair 10 schools and other buildings throughout the Philippines.*

- Soldiers with the Philippine Army practice tactics and techniques using rifles and camouflage during bilateral weapons training with U.S. Marines and Sailors of the Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit Feb. 23 at Carpus Tarlac, Philippines. The Sailors and Marines will train with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, sharing skills including squad tactics, jungle tactics, patrolling formations, combat lifesaving procedures and martial arts techniques.



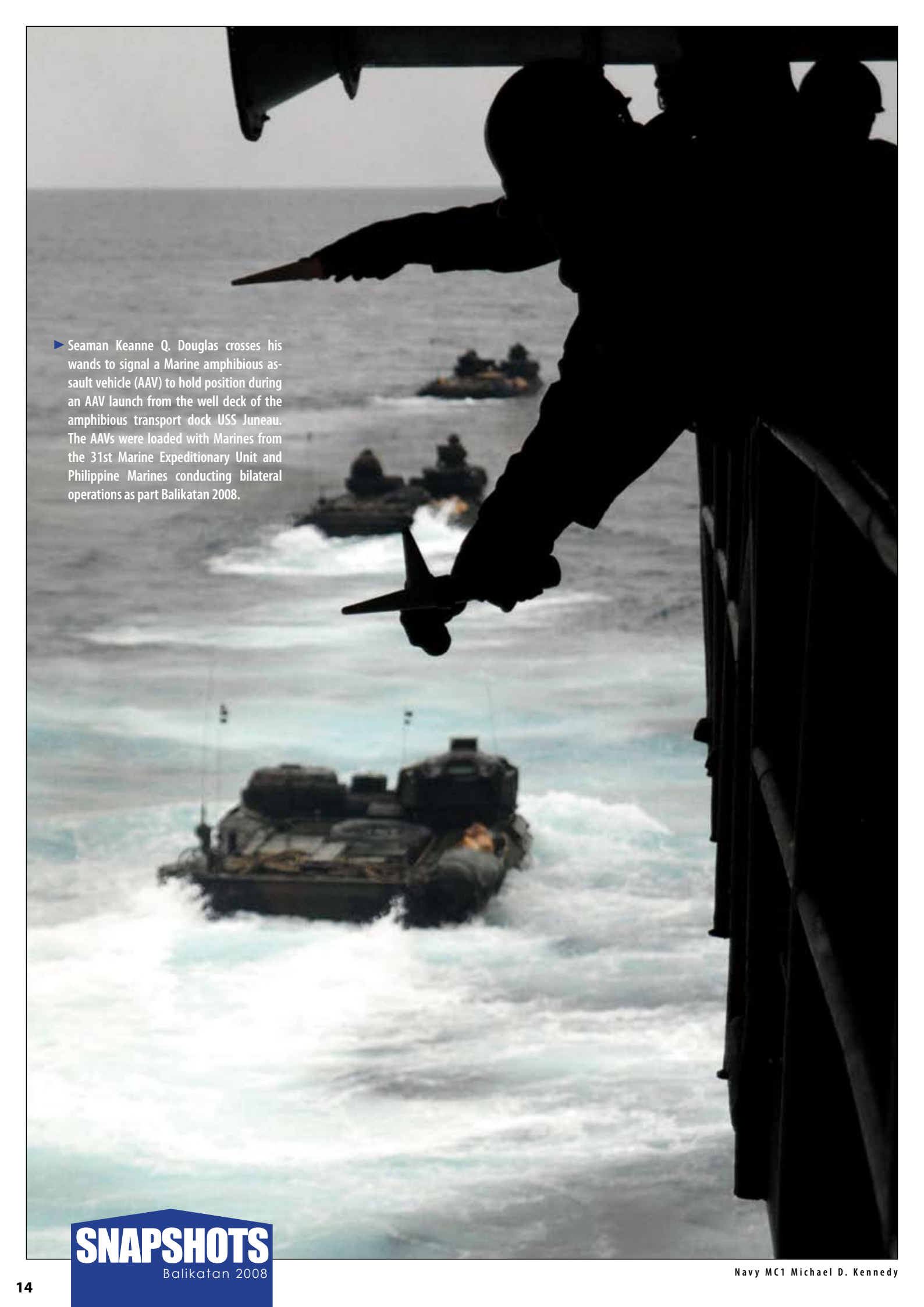
Marine Lance Cpl. Jason Spinella



- ◀ Sgt. Randy Eustaquio indulges in the warrior tradition of drinking cobra's blood during the survival course at Fort Ramon Magsaysay Feb. 19 during Exercise Balikatan. Eustaquio is an infantryman with 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry of the Guam Army National Guard.

Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay





► Seaman Keanne Q. Douglas crosses his wands to signal a Marine amphibious assault vehicle (AAV) to hold position during an AAV launch from the well deck of the amphibious transport dock USS Juneau. The AAVs were loaded with Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and Philippine Marines conducting bilateral operations as part Balikatan 2008.



► Filipino Marine recruits and U.S. Marines and Sailors with Combat Logistics Battalion 31, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, carry lumber during an Engineering Civic Assistance Project, at Maragondon National High School in Cavite, Feb. 20. The Marines and Sailors of the 31st MEU, alongside the Armed Forces of the Philippines, also provided medical and dental assistance for over 1,500 local patients and refurbished a fire-damaged school, further strengthening the relationship between U.S. forces and the Republic of the Philippines.



Marine Lance Cpl. Jason Spinella



Navy MC2 Johansen Laurel

▲ Students at Maragondong High School wait for the visit of the U.S. Ambassador and other VIPs during a Community Relations (COMREL) Project Feb. 26 during Balikatan 2008.





Marine Lance Cpl. Ronald W. Stauffer

▶ Travis Lacaden, a member of Balikatan 2008's U.S. military forces volleyball team, jumps to deflect a spike from Anthony Ochoa, a member of a local volleyball team, Feb. 22, during a sports event of BK 08.

▼ A local girl watches Philippine and American Soldiers repair a classroom at the Barangay Liwayway elementary school in the Nueva Ecija province, Philippines Feb. 22 as part of Exercise Balikatan 2008.



Army Staff Sgt. Manuel Torres-Cortes





Navy MC2 Joshua Wahl

- ▶ U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Robert O. Beveridge, a Corpsman with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, along with an AFP colleague, performs a medical consultation with the local community during Balikatan 2008.

*More than 10,000 patients were seen over the course of 20 Medical Civic Assistance Programs during Balikatan 2008.*

- ▶ A patient is examined by a U.S. Air Force medical provider and a volunteer nursing student from Marawi State University during a free medical clinic held at Tagaya, Lanao Del Sur, Feb. 21, as part of the humanitarian assistance programs of the 24th annual Balikatan. The event provided medical, dental and optometric care to 643 children and adults.

*Dentists examined nearly 2,000 patients over the course of 15 dental civic assistance programs during Balikatan 2008.*



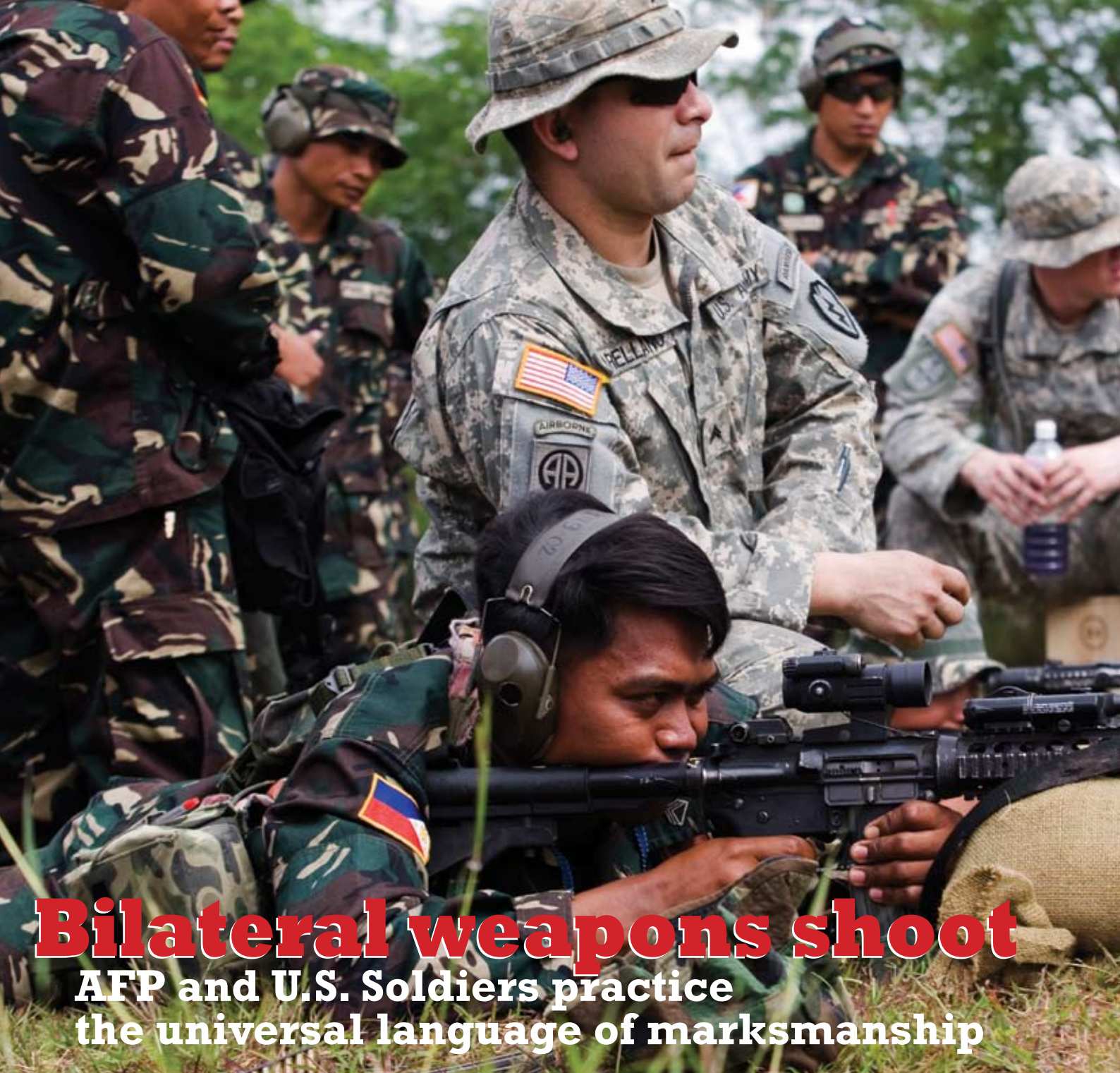
Navy MCC Gabe Puello

- ▼ A U.S. Marine pays his respects to deceased Philippine Army Scouts at Clark Cemetery Feb. 19. The Philippine Scouts were native Filipinos who served in the U.S. Army's Philippine Department beginning in 1901, through World War II.



Army Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller  
**Balikatan 2008**





# Bilateral weapons shoot

## AFP and U.S. Soldiers practice the universal language of marksmanship



Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Balboa illustrates how to compensate when shooting with an optical sight to Philippine Army Soldiers during a bilateral marksmanship training course at Fort Ramon Magsaysay Feb. 20.

*By Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay*

**T**here are universal fundamentals to marksmanship: slow steady breathing, steady trigger squeeze and a firm, supporting firing stance, just to name a few. With any small arms weapon, from service rifles to the Barret M-107 .50 caliber sniper rifle, fundamentals are needed to enhance marksmanship.

The M-107 was one of seven weapons fired at a bilateral marksmanship training course at Fort Ramon Magsaysay, Feb. 20 during Balikatan 2008. Balikatan is an annual, bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military.

Approximately 100 U.S. Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, trained with Soldiers from the Philippine Army.

Both American and Philippine Soldiers improved their marksmanship over the course. Soldiers fired at multiple distances with the M-16 A1 and M-16 A4 service rifles as well as M-4 carbines with various optical sights.

"The Philippine Soldiers are motivated and have such a great attitude," said U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Balboa. "You can tell they want us here and we want to help them in any way we can."

The American Soldiers assisted the Philippine Soldiers with their optical sights but more importantly, they





U.S. Army Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division stationed at Fort Wayne, Alaska, train with Philippine Army Soldiers during a bilateral marksmanship training course Feb. 20 at Fort Ramon Magsaysay during Exercise Balikatan 2008.

Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

stressed the basics of shooting are universal with any weapon.

"We really want them to come away with better fundamentals of marksmanship," Balboa said. "Good shooters around the world, who shoot day in and day out. They are drilled with fundamentals and have it dialed down."

During the course of the day, Soldiers fired approximately 23,000 rounds from small arms weapons, but later in the day, Soldiers were able to get a hands-on demonstration of the U.S. Army's heavier fire power; the M-24 sniper rifle and the AT-4 anti-armor rocket launcher.

The extra firepower brought out smiles from both nations' Soldiers.

"It has been a terrific time," said Philippine Army 2nd Lt. Kenny Romano, the Scout Platoon leader with 68th Inf. Battalion, 2nd Inf. Div. "This is my first time I have been part of Balikatan. All the Philippine battalions look forward to it each year. I think we are very lucky to have trained with the U.S. Soldiers during the exercise."

The U.S. Soldiers also touched on their squad tactics from patrolling and shared combat experiences with their Philippine counterparts.

The interaction also allowed Soldiers to experience each other's culture and build on a history-rich friendship.

"We are not only learning tactics, but also how to work together with our allies," Romano said. "We work very well

together and get to adapt to each others' cultures."

The camaraderie between the two nations' warriors was felt by both sides.

"[The Philippine Soldiers] are all very disciplined as well," Balboa added. "Their attitude and motivation is the biggest reason today was so successful."

After all the shots had been fired, it left both services wanting more and looking forward to the next time they train "shoulder-to-shoulder."

"If we get the chance to participate in Balikatan again we will definitely do it," Romano said. "I hope we are selected to participate again next year."



Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Balboa (right) describes the characteristics of a Barret M-107 .50 caliber sniper rifle to Philippine Army Brig. Gen. Nestor R. Sadiaren (bottom left) and U.S. Army Brig. Gen. John Y. H. Ma (center) during bilateral marksmanship training at Fort Ramon Magsaysay Feb 20.



Cpl. Kevin L. Knallay

Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

A Philippine Army Soldier checks out the Barret M-107 .50 caliber sniper rifle during a bilateral marksmanship training course at Fort Ramon Magsaysay Feb 20.



# AIM HIGH!

## Philippine children see AFP and U.S. Air Force up close

*By Navy MC3 Bryan Reckard*

Children point in awe and wonder as military jets soar overhead, but a group of Filipino children got to explore those airborne mysteries on the ground at a recent aircraft display.

More than 120 Filipino children from the Duyan ni Maria Orphanage in Angeles City and Magalang Elementary School in Magalang had the opportunity to see the Philippine and U.S. Air Force up close at Clark Airfield Feb. 23, during Exercise Balikatan 2008. Balikatan is an annual Republic of the Philippines/U.S. bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise.

The children got to check out seven aircraft. The Philippine OV-10A Bronco, a S-211 Fighter Jet, a SF-260 Turboprop, a MG-520 Helicopter, and a UH-1H Helicopter, and the U.S. C-17 Globemaster and C-130 Hercules.

After the children had time to play pilot, they filled up on burgers and spaghetti from the local Jollibee restaurant. The children also received donated school supplies, clothing and toys from the U.S. Air Force.

The coordinator of the event, Air National Guard Master Sgt. Joseph Salvador of the 204<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron (204<sup>th</sup> AS), said that he wanted to try to make a big impact with the event and wanted to do something for the children.

"I looked for an orphanage that wasn't well to do," he said. "I wanted to make some kind of effect with our donation [of] books and supplies to a school that doesn't hardly see any military efforts."

According to Salvador the lunch was provided by individual donations from Balikatan participants, and the school supplies, clothing and toys were donated by Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii and Yokota Air Force Base in Japan.

It was the opportunity of a lifetime for the kids to see the aircraft both inside and out. They often wonder what they look like up close.

"Of course the kids appreciate it very much because whenever an aircraft passes over where we are, of course



Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler  
Philippine Air Force Staff Sgt. Ronie A. Eban helps a child into a Philippine Air Force S-211 fighter jet at the Clark Freeport airfield Feb. 23.



Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler  
Several local youngsters teach U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Henrietta Pugh, a 36th Airlift Squadron aviation resource management specialist, how to count in Tagalog at the Clark Freeport airfield Feb. 23.





U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Miguel Torres, an aviation resource manager with the 535th Air-lift Squadron, shares a Meal Ready to Eat with a group of interested Filipino kids at the Clark Freeport airfield Feb. 23.

Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

they would like to look at the aircraft because they are wondering what's inside this 'big animal' flying over," said Sister Maria Alessandrina Casas, founder of the orphanage.

U.S. Air Force Capt. Doug Watjus, the lead C-130 planner, said that making the kids happy was the major goal of the event and it was a terrific to have bean part of it.

"It has been great," said Watjus. "A lot of these kids look at these airplanes and this is the first time they're getting this close to them. With the Philippine Air Force static displays kids are getting to crawl around inside there and actually get time to sit in the seats and you can see the smiles on their faces. They're ecstatic."

The children's happiness was also felt by Mary Ann L. Justinian, a volunteer for the Duyan ni Maria Orphanage.

"The kids [are] happy and enjoying what you're doing for them and [so am I]. I am so excited for this kind of opportunity that you have [given to] Duyan ni Maria," said Justinian. "The kids are our happiness because without the kids we're nothing."



Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler  
U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Japhia Arline, a 374th Maintenance Squadron aircraft fuel systems specialist, hands out candy to a group of Filipino kids at the Clark Freeport airfield Feb. 23.





Army Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller

(Above) Armed Forces of the Philippines Special Operations service members load a U.S. Air Force C-130 before conducting a friendship jump with U.S. Army Special Forces Feb. 22.



Marine Lance Cpl. Ronald W. Stauffer

(Right) Members of U.S. Army Special Forces soar out the back of a C-17 Globemaster III jet at an altitude of 6,000 feet during the high altitude low opening (HALO) portion of the training exercise.



**“We’re more than just shoulder to shoulder,  
we’re brothers.”** – U.S. Army Special Forces Officer –



# FRIENDSHIP JUMP

**AFP Special Operations service members and their American counterparts conduct a friendship jump.**

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*By Army Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller*

“Stand by ...GO!”

Language and cultural barriers all but disappeared for paratroopers of two nations with that one phrase. Special Operations service members from all branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and their U.S. military counterparts jumped from a low-flying U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft at the Clark Freeport Air Field Feb. 22.

The goal for the airborne operation was building friendship and trust during this year’s Balikatan activities.

“Every year the Americans come here and we train together,” said an AFP Air Force Special Operator before his 16th training jump with American forces. “It helps us out, and them out. We teach each other things.”

The jump was unique because it was meant to be fun, but also provided valuable development.

“It gives us a chance to take a break from the other training and do something that is both fun and sustainment training,” said a U.S. Army Special Forces officer.

“[It’s my] first jump with [the] U.S.,” said one Philippine Army Soldier. “[It] will be good fun.”

Following a morning of safety inspections conducted at the Clark International Airport, the large group of Special Operators boarded two U.S. Air Force C-130s for a short ride, then a quick fall toward the drop zone several miles away.

“It went very well. The winds appeared to be high, but when we jumped they were all but gone,” said an American Special Forces Soldier.

“It was good!” agreed an excited AFP service member after landing safely. “I want to go again.”

For the third and final jump, Philippine and American Special Operations service members conducted a High Altitude, Low Opening (HALO) jump.

At heights of up to 10,000 feet, a HALO jump is one of the most difficult and dangerous military maneuvers to accomplish, where paratroopers freefall several thousand feet before deploying their parachute.

After rigorous preparation, the small group of experienced jumpers boarded a U.S. Air Force C-17 airplane, and upon reaching 6,000 feet, jumped. But training wasn’t the day’s only aim; building trust is one of the main missions of Balikatan and an integral part of this jump.

“We’re more than shoulder to shoulder,” said the American Special Forces officer, “we’re brothers.”





Philippine tug boats guide forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2) as it enters port at the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Feb. 18 for the annual Republic of the Philippines and the United States bilateral exercise Balikatan. While in port, the USS Essex will work with Republic of Philippines service members to perform humanitarian assistance and disaster relief events, and improve maritime security.

Navy MC2 Mark R. Alvarez



# USS Essex arrives to Balikatan on goodwill mission

*By Navy MCC Ty Swartz*

The forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Essex arrived in the Philippines Feb. 18 for the bilateral exercise Balikatan 2008.

"Essex Sailors are proud to be a part of this exercise, which focuses on helping people," said U.S. Navy Capt. Brent Canady, Essex' commanding officer. "One of Essex' many missions includes providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Western Pacific region, so any opportunity for us to tune up those procedures provides valuable training opportunities. It is especially gratifying to once again work with our strategic partner, the Republic of the Philippines."

During Balikatan 2008, Essex will operate with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in the vicinity of western Luzon. Sailors will also participate in Community Relations projects at selected school sites where Sailors will be painting, cleaning, and interacting with students.

Balikatan 2008 will be the 24th annual event of its kind held under the auspices of the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) and Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

"These humanitarian assistance and training

activities enable our soldiers to get to know each other, train together, and provide assistance in communities where the need is greatest," said U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "True to the meaning of the word balikatan, Philippine and U.S. forces are shouldering the load together to help the greatest possible number of people in need."

The U.S. and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines are working bilaterally to ensure humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts are efficient and effective. BK 08 is also a great opportunity to conduct training which is vital to maintaining the readiness and interoperability of the U.S. and the Republic of the Philippines military forces.

Essex strives to make a positive difference in the Western Pacific through continued friendship building engagements, while remaining a vigilant force for security, stability and prosperity.

Essex is the only forward-deployed amphibious assault ship and serves Task Force 76 the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force. Task Force 76 is headquartered at White Beach Naval Facility Okinawa, Japan, with an operating detachment in Sasebo, Japan.





# AFP and USS Essex bring hope to Ternate

By Navy MC2 Joshua J. Wahl

Sailors and Marines from the forward-deployed Essex Expeditionary Strike Group (ESX ESG) brought humanitarian medical and dental treatment to more than 3,000 Philippine people of Ternate during a two-day humanitarian civil assistance project Feb. 19-20 as part of Balikatan 2008.

The dock landing ship, USS Harpers Ferry (LSD 49) assigned to the ESX ESG, arrived in Ternate to assist in humanitarian efforts. Philippine Marines and U.S. Navy and Marine forces worked together in a variety of humanitarian assistance projects by offering free medical, dental and veterinary care to local residents.

Medical and dental personnel teamed up with Armed Forces of the Philippines and local medical personnel to provide aid in their respective fields seeing patients at Maragondon National High School.

"It is amazing the number of people who came out to see and thank us for our assistance," said Navy Lt. Brandt L. Cullen, a dental officer assigned to the Harpers Ferry. "These people need our assistance, and when you look at the positive impact we have overall on the people you realize how good it is to work together."

The Philippine word "balikatan," meaning "shouldering the load together," was evident as everybody worked together for a universal purpose of helping people in need.

"This is a real honor to have the American and Philippine military working together here at Maragondon helping today," said Monte A. Andaman, the Maragondon city mayor. "We see the true meaning of balikatan when we look around at people working together."

"It is our honor to be here and help out those in need," said Harpers Ferry Command Master Chief (SW/SS) Darryl L. Brandt. "This is the stuff the Sailors need to get out and see the world, help people and strengthen our relationship with the Philippines."

The medical and dental assistance yielded from the Sailors and Marines from Harpers Ferry brought comprehensive humanitarian efforts along with other engineering and community relation projects during a wide spread humanitarian and assistance projects throughout the Luzon Island of the Philippines.



Navy MC2 Joshua Wahl

(Above) Lt. Todd E. Gregory, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, left, and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Robert O. Beveridge, Health Services Support, Combat Logistics Battalion 31, perform a medical consultation with Philippine senior citizens.

(Right) Lt. Cmdr. Ann B. Monasky, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, performs a dental exam on a local Ternate child.



# Chaplains

## Philippine, U.S. Chaplains strengthen religious programs

By Marine Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

In addition to experiencing a new culture and exotic locale while participating in Exercise Balikatan 2008, an annual Republic of the Philippines/U.S. bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise, several officers here had a recent exchange with their Filipino contemporaries, which was just as much spiritual as it was professional.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. Army chaplains came together to strengthen the bond between the two countries' military religious programs during a visit to Manila Feb. 21.

"With this [visit] we kind of walked through the door ... on the religious side," said Lt. Col. John C. Molina, a U.S. Army Pacific Command chaplain who is serving Balikatan participants. "We have established a foundation by understanding their needs and by them understanding us as well."

The day's first stop was the Camp Aguinaldo AFP Ecumenical Building, where Molina and Maj. Scott Sterling, Balikatan command chaplain, met with heads of the AFP Chaplain Service. The officers discussed, over coffee, challenges and achievements in each other's programs as well as similarities in their missions.

"We have a very beautiful mission, and that is to provide opportunities for the religious expression and moral growth of our armed forces personnel and their dependents," said Brig. Gen. Eprodito C. Magno, AFP Chief of Chaplain Service.

According to Magno, the longstanding relationship between Philippine and U.S. forces only strengthens the bond shared by their chaplain corps.

"We've been together in so many [conflicts] before, so like I said, we need to be together - to love each other, to pray together - because we have one mission, and that is to maintain peace in our countries," Magno said.

"We need to join our hands together - shoulder to shoulder - and that's why you are here," he added.

After meeting up with Col. Vincent J. Inghilterra, command chaplain for the 8<sup>th</sup> Theater Sustainment Command, the Americans toured the Philippine Army, Marine Corps and Air Force Headquarters at Fort Bonifacio, meeting with the different services' command chaplains. The group also visited the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial.

Molina said that regardless of nationality, military branch or religion, all chaplains agreed on how to best serve their parishioners.

There's a very strong ecumenical positive attitude where you have Muslim Islamics, Roman Catholics, Protestants and Independent Catholics working together and supporting all the Soldiers, airmen, Marines and sailors, Molina said.

"There's a mutual desire to do the best for each other and look out for each other's needs."

In their final stop they met with Military Ordinariate of the Philippines Bishop Leopoldo S. Tumalak. Tumalak, who holds a unique position granted by the Vatican to endorse chaplains for Filipino or American military service, discussed with the group the current need to bolster both sides' chaplain numbers.

"We're really trying to encourage Soldiers who have gone through all those experiences - of fighting, being lonely and being out there - to become priests," Tumalak said. "If there is anybody more committed than our bishops, it's our Soldiers."

Molina agreed, and said the meeting was a good way to wrap up what he considers to be a very successful visit.

"We understand his needs better and he understands our needs too," Molina said. "It allows for some easier dialog when we have any questions ... so it's a very positive thing to know him personally."

He added, "Everyone is looking forward to furthering the ties formed this year and conducting more religious support training during the next Balikatan."



Lt. Todd E. Gregory, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, speaks to a translator from the armed forces of the Philippines to help facilitate proper medical attention during the medical and dental civic action program.

Navy MC2 Joshua Wahl



Navy MC2 Joshua Wahl



# STAFFEX

## Exercise helps prepare nations for joint response to natural disaster

By Navy MC3 Matthew R. White

The ground shakes, ash, mud and steam spew from Mt. Taal, a volcano in Luzon, Philippines, located just 30 miles from the capital city of Manila; a humanitarian crisis is on the horizon.

The Staff Exercise and Command Post Exercise portions of Balikatan 2008, an annual Republic of the Philippines and United States bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise held in Clark Freeport, Philippines, are working through this crisis scenario to be prepared in the event of an actual natural disaster. The two countries will work together for nearly two weeks to ensure the forces of the Republic of the Philippines and the United States can work together seamlessly to offer the quickest, most complete response possible.

"(We are) conducting a combined STAFFEX-CPX, in the Republic of the Philippines comprised of (the Armed Forces of the Philippines) and U.S. joint force staffs," said Steve Showalter, Joint-Task Force Taal STAFFEX/CPX senior controller. "We're focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief."

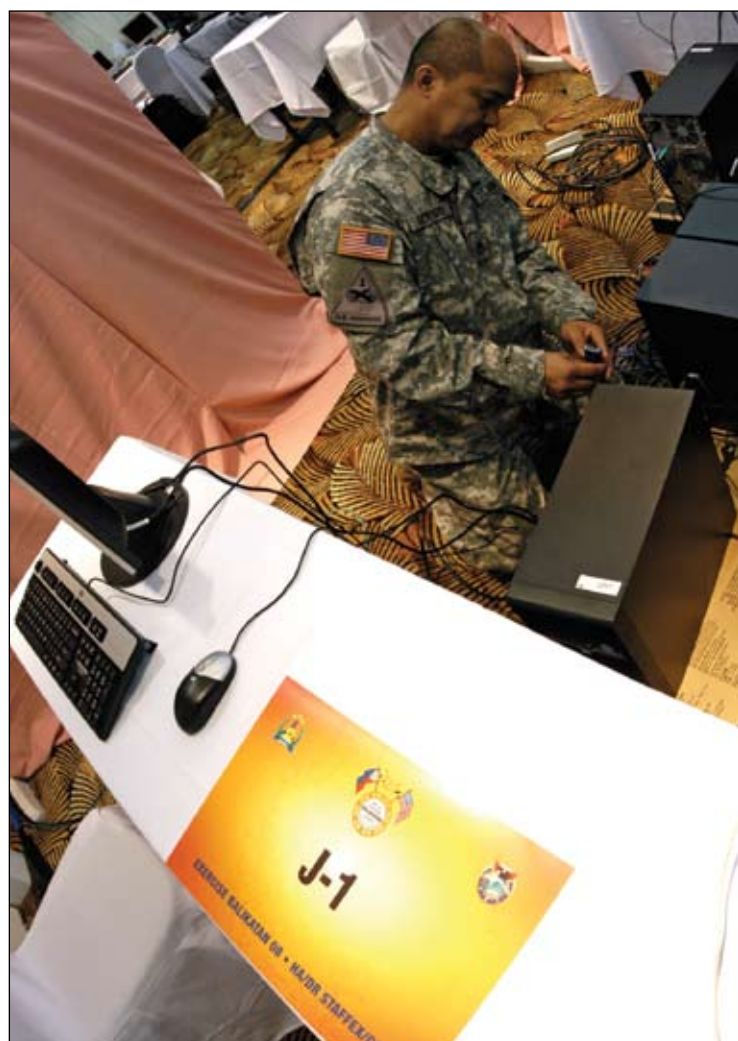
The Philippine and U.S. forces are practicing their joint response to a very real threat.

According to the United States Geological Survey Web site, the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry



Marine Cpl. Kevin M. Knallay

U.S. Marine Capt. Cedric N. Lee gives a brief introduction to the Joint Task Force communication systems at Clark Freeport Feb. 18 during Exercise Balikatan 2008, an annual bilaterally humanitarian assistance and military training exercise between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. military. Lee is the communications officer for Joint Task Force Taal.



Navy MC3 Matthew R. White

Army Staff Sgt. Perfecto Gervacio from Ft. Richardson, Alaska sets up a computer prior to Balikatan 2008.

of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI) has identified 16 volcanoes with a history of large, destructive eruptions, and with close proximity to populated areas. The IAVCEI has labeled these volatile volcanoes Decade Volcanoes. Mt. Taal is one of the 16.

"U.S. JTF Taal and AFP JTF Taal will provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities in the aftermath of a volcano eruption destroying infrastructure and displacing people in the southern Luzon area," Showalter said.

According to Philippine Army Col. Rafael Valencia, co-director of the STAFFEX and CPX, the staff exercise is a venue for Philippine and U.S. joint-task force headquarters to train and learn how to operate together during Balikatan.

"It's more on addressing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as maritime security operations," Valencia said.

While the humanitarian disaster response is the driving force behind the exercise, the opportunity for both countries to work together is an important component as well.

Valencia said that in the future there will be many situations where Filipinos and Americans will have to work together and with other nations.

"Exercises like this prepare us, not only the Filipinos but also the Americans, to work with ... the armed forces of other countries, to address whatever situation may arise," Valencia said. "Whether it is war fighting (or a) response to natural calamities, it's a learning experience not only for us but for (U.S.) forces also."

It's important that Balikatan 2008 is focusing on non-traditional threats and natural disasters, said Valencia. It highlights the need for cooperation between the Philippines, United States, as well as other countries in the region.

Valencia added, the STAFFEX/CPX is just a small part of Balikatan 2008, but its impact on the bilateral cooperation between the two countries is important and significant.





# Help drops in

*AFP & U.S. Airmen practice equipment, supply airdrop*

*By Marine Lance Cpl. Ronald W. Stauffer*

When a natural disaster strikes and people are in desperate need of life saving food, water and supplies, all they need to do is look to the skies.

Philippine and U.S. Airmen conducted simulated airdrop training to improve airdrop procedures for just such a crisis at Clark Freeport, Feb. 19.

U.S. Air Force Capt. Greg Davis, executive officer for the vice commander of the 5th Air Force, said drops are a pretty lengthy and involved process that may look simple from the ground, but involve a lot of behind the scenes work and extensive planning.

Using a drop marker to establish their position, the three-man ground crew set up a communications link while Philippine Airmen secured the drop zone perimeter and waited for the first C-130 Hercules to make its drop.

Determining the calculations for dropping the heavy equipment and containers can be difficult, but the ground team was in position to radio in wind direction and speed to the plane. "They're usually right on target with their drops," said U.S. Air Force Capt. James Hughes, air mobility liaison office for 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron.

As the first plane closed in on the drop zone, a parachute billowed out the back, dragging the initial pallet from the plane.

"These drops can be used for humanitarian relief or a natural disaster like a tsunami," Davis said. "It's absolutely vital for us to be able to re-supply somebody after a natural disaster."

Martinez added, "A lot of the drops simulate food, water and medical supplies. We get in what's needed [initially], until we can get in supplies by road."

After the cargo landed and the plane was clear, a ground crew located the pallet and retrieved it with a forklift.

"This gives us a chance to use our training in other places and to put it to use in the real world," said Master Sgt. Gregorio Martinez, combat mobility element leader for 15th Logistics Readiness Squadron. "It also familiarizes the crews with the terrain in the Philippines [in case] they ever need to make a drop here."

Davis added, "[This is] a great opportunity for both the U.S. and the AFP because they get to see how we work and it benefits the overall relationship between the two countries."

Marine Lance Cpl. Ronald W. Stauffer



A pallet with simulated supplies falls toward the ground from a U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules during an airdrop, Feb. 19 at Clark Freeport.



# Balikatan 2008

Balikatan, in its 24th year, is an annual, bilateral humanitarian assistance and military training exercise between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America.



Army Sgt. Stephen Proctor

▲ Dental Civic Assistance Programs helped nearly 2,000 people during 15 DENCAPS



Army Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller

▲ Veterinary Civic Assistance Programs helped more than 500 animals during 6 VETCAPS



Air Force Staff Sgt. Shawn Weismiller

▼ Engineering Civic Assistance Programs built and repaired 10 structures during BK 08



Marine Lance Cpl. Jason Spinella

▼ Medical Civic Assistance Programs helped more than 10,000 people during 20 MEDCAPS



Marine Lance Cpl. Jason Spinella

◀ Community relations projects have helped improve and renovate  
12 schools  
2 bases  
2 landmarks  
1 public facility

